



The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 18 January 1968



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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

Special Daily Report on North Vietnam



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I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

Hanoi's Man in Paris Tries to Heighten World Interest in Trinh's Offer: Mai Van Bo did not cut any important new ground in his interview in Paris on Tuesday, but he did expand a little on Foreign Minister Trinh's 29 December "will talk" statement. He said negotiations could begin "a suitable time" after a bombing halt.* He also indicated that both the level of talks and the agenda were negotiable and could be discussed during a preliminary meeting between the two parties. US acceptance of the Trinh offer could be relayed to Hanoi either by means of a US statement or "any other procedure" demonstrating US sincerity, he said. Bo, however, underscored Hanoi's contention that there will be no reciprocal gesture to a US bombing halt.

Bo's purpose was clearly to reinforce the impression that Hanoi has made a significant initiative and that now it is up to the US to respond without asking anything more of the Communists.

Bo, who is one of Hanoi's most authoritative spokesmen, went out of his way to secure immediate release of his interview. When he found that the French TV program which was to carry it was postponed, he had his material released through the French News Agency and simultaneously offered it to other Western news services.

* A cable from the US Embassy, Paris, reports that Bo gave another interview yesterday and was somewhat more specific. He said talks could begin in "a matter of days" after a bombing halt. This interview is the one reported in this morning's Washington Post and sourced to "North Vietnamese officials."

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More on a Hanoi Trade Mission to Singapore: Singapore will permit a visit by a trade mission from Hanoi in the near future but a government spokesman states that the mission will not be granted permanent status. Singapore's trade with Hanoi totaled only \$3.5 million in 1966, less than one-tenth of one percent of total trade. Primarily, North Vietnam ships coffee to Singapore in exchange for Malaysian crude rubber and coconut oil. Singapore is a major transshipment port for Far Eastern trade, and Soviet ships bound for Haiphong from the Black Sea stop at the port regularly.

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Belgian Communists Plan Big Antiwar Show: Belgian Communists have overcome some factional difficulties in the national Vietnam committee and are now clearing the decks for what they expect to be the biggest anti-Vietnam war demonstration in Belgian history. It is planned for 2 March and five or six other groups have promised to join the Communists in the effort.

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II. NORTH VIETNAMESE REFLECTIONS OF US POLITICAL ATTITUDES ON THE WAR

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More Hanoi Reports on US and other Western Anti-war Activities: Hanoi radio's international service carried a broadcast in English on 17 January reporting what it implied was an upsurge of antiwar sentiment in the US labor movement. It claimed that over 500 members of 50 US labor unions in 38 of the 50 states had recently issued a statement in Chicago saying that "nothing can justify the sacrifice of countless precious lives of Americans and Vietnamese." The group, according to the broadcast, went on to demand an end to the bombing and the opening of negotiations with the Liberation Front.

The same Hanoi broadcast also carried accounts of recent anti-Vietnam war meetings in New Zealand, the Netherlands, France, and Tunisia.

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